

How an Entry Is Judged

Regardless of which category a student enters, the following principles of evaluation will be used in the judging of National History Day entries.

Historical Quality

The most important aspect of an entry is its *historical quality*, which determines 60% of the total evaluation. The judges' evaluation will rest on the students' success at conducting historical research, interpreting their research, and drawing conclusions. A superior rating generally reflects positive responses to the following questions:

- Is the entry historically accurate?
- Does the entry provide analysis and interpretation of the historical data in addition to an accurate description? The entry should **not** simply recount facts but interpret them.
- Does the entry demonstrate an understanding of the historical context – the intellectual, physical, social, and cultural setting?
- Does the entry reflect historical perspective – the causes and consequences of an event, for example, or the relationship of a local topic to larger events?
- Does the annotated bibliography demonstrate solid research?
- Does the entry demonstrate a balanced presentation of materials?
- Does the entry use a variety of viewpoints (e.g., those who suffered as well as those who benefited, males, females, people from different racial or ethnic socioeconomic groups, as appropriate to the topic)?
- Does the entry demonstrate the use of available primary sources and secondary sources?

Clarity of Presentation

Although historical quality is most important, entries must be presented in an effective manner. This section is worth 20% of the total evaluation. Do not be carried away by glitz; simpler is often –but not always–better. The following questions will be considered by judges when looking at *clarity of presentation*:

- Is the entry original, creative, well organized, and imaginative in subject and presentation?
- Is the entry effective in communicating the significance of the topic?
- Is the written material clear, grammatical, and correctly spelled?
- In exhibits, are the title, sectional divisions, and main points easy to discern?
- Are photographs and images appropriate in terms of content and location?
- Is the overall project pleasing to the eye?
- In a documentary or performance, is the script clear?
- In a performance, do the students display stage presence?
- Is the visual material clear and appropriate for the type of entry?
- Do the students display adequate familiarity with their equipment?

Adherence to Theme

The entry must clearly explain the relation of the topic to the annual National History Day theme. This section is worth 20% of the total evaluation. The topic should be placed in historical context, and the entry must demonstrate the student's understanding of the significance of the topic *in history*. The entry should not confuse fame with significance. In other words, the entry should answer the questions, "So what? Why was this important?" It should not be just descriptive. The relationship of the entry's topic to the yearly theme should be explicit and should be integrated into the entry itself.